

Improving Male Participation in Reproductive Health

**Satellite Conference
Wednesday, June 16, 2004
2:00-4:00 p.m. (Central Time)**

Produced by the Alabama Department of Public Health
Video Communications Division

Faculty

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Objectives

1. Describe the four tenets of "The Boy Code" that can impact a male's ability to avail himself to and receive reproductive health care.
2. Identify at least five strategies for helping males to move beyond the constraints of "The Boy Code".
3. Describe four strategies for communicating with males about sexuality and reproductive health issues.

Seven Scary Sexuality Subjects

- Spontaneous erections
- Male responsibility
- Penis size
- Masturbation
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Sexual violence
- Love and commitment

Acceptance

- Are we willing to make a place for males in our sexuality education programs and reproductive health clinics?

Awareness

- Continue to raise awareness of the traditional male process by which males are forged into "real men". Help men understand the process best defined by William Pollock's "The Boy Code".

The Boy Code: The Ideal

- The STURDY OAK -- Men never show weakness -- they are stoic, stable and independent
- GIVE 'EM HELL -- Be a "wild child". The idea that males are predisposed to be high energy, even violent, super humans.
- The BIG WHEEL -- Work for status, dominance and power, and avoid *feelings of shame at all cost*.
- NO SISSY STUFF -- Shut out feelings.

Lessons From Boomer

Real Men:

- Drink hard, fight hard and live hard.
- Work REAL jobs.
- Have no fear (except of snakes).
- Cuss a blue streak.
- Don't wear shorts.

Lessons From Boomer (continued)

Real Men:

- Like women in the bedroom and kitchen.
- Smoke Camels.
- Don't drink Lite Beer.
- Inflict pain, but never feel it.
- Follow "isms."

Reality

- Continue to teach males about the reality of "The Boy Code", to help them *know its real results* not just its promises.

The Boy Code: The Reality

- The STURDY OAK -- Males appear to be confident, sturdy and independent when they *really* feel afraid, shaky, and needy for love and support.
- GIVE 'EM HELL -- May encourage boys to dare one another to take greater and greater risks.

The Boy Code: The Reality (continued)

- The BIG WHEEL -- Males may push beyond reasonable limits for academic, physical or career success in an effort to repress feelings of failure or unhappiness.
- NO SISSY STUFF -- Since feelings are seen as "feminine" males who display them risk ridicule until they learn how to rein them in.

Permission

- Continue to give males permission to act outside of the stereotypes that become expected if one is a “real boy”.

Safety

- Continue to provide males with a sense of safety – emotional safety.
- Emotional safety for males means to be able to act and speak without feeling shame.
- Never underestimate the power of shame to influence and direct male’s behavior.

Mentoring

- Continue to provide mentoring.
- But mentors need to be authentic males, not just guys reinforcing the traditional male models.

What is an Authentic Male?

- The Wounded Healer – a fully human man who helps others without denying or covering over his own need for that which he gives others.
- The Peacemaker – the man who has discovered the strength in powerlessness and is willing to lay down his power; even to live non-violently.

What is an Authentic Male? (continued)

- The man who attempts to live the Disciplined Life of the Lover by being: patient, big-hearted (kind), gracious, unpretentious, well-mannered, selfless, good tempered, respectful, honest and trustworthy.

Forgiveness

- The pressure to follow the traditional male path is tremendous. Even when males move outside the stereotype, they may go back.
- When that happens, we need to praise the attempt even as we offer forgiveness.
- Unforgiveness is a form a shame.

Accountability

- When males mess up, they want to try to fix it.
- Allow males to be accountable – to be able to make amends when amends are due.
- The ability to make amends, for a male, gives him a chance to recover or maintain some dignity when he feels shame.

Legacy

- Continue to empower males to form a legacy of “Authentic Manhood” and give them an opportunity to pass on the “Authentic Male Model” to the next generation.

Shaping Authentic Males

- The process of reframing manhood by shaping “Authentic Males” is one that community-based organizations are perfectly situated to do.
- The shaping of “Authentic Males” happens in homes before neighborhoods; neighborhoods before cities; cities before counties; counties before states; and states before a nation.

Shaping Authentic Males (continued)

- To facilitate the change, reach males where they live.
- Continue to shape “authentic males” by including these nine guiding principles in your work with males.

Tips for Talking with Males

- Respect the power of “The Boy Code”
- Use stories to communicate messages
- Speak in “sound bites”
- Keep busy while you are talking

Respect “The Boy Code”

- To respect the power of “The Boy Code” is not condoning it.
- Even when males want to play by other rules, it may not be emotionally, even physically, safe for them to do so.
- To respect “The Body Code” is to simply be aware of the powerful lessons it has taught a boy long before you had the chance to talk with him.

How the Code Impacts the Talk

- **Sturdy Oak** – a wall may go up to suggest he already has it together
- **Give ‘Em Hell** – the idea of “safe sex” may seem to go against the expectations of the code
- **The Big Wheel** – may be tough for a male to admit he doesn’t already know everything
- **No Sissy Stuff** – to avoid any feelings, especially shame, he won’t respond to guilt except, perhaps, with anger

Tell Stories

- Story telling is a powerful way of talking about ideas as well as feelings in a way that is emotionally safe for males
- When males tell stories, if we listen carefully, we can hear the feelings that lie just beneath the surface

Sound Bites

- Keep your “teaching” to a minimum
- The lessons behind the stories are the sound bites that can be “dropped” in the form of a comment or even just a conclusion
- Look for opportunities to simply “drop” a piece of information or an idea into the conversation

Keep Busy

- Some of the best conversations with males occur in the context of doing something, anything, else
- Because the conversation is the focus it tends to be more:
 - Comfortable
 - Natural
 - Flowing
 - Safe
 - Easily received

Upcoming Programs

**Agroterrorism and Public Health:
Reestablishing an Old Relationship**

Thursday, June 24, 2004

12:00-1:30 p.m. (Central Time)

**Obesity and Family Planning:
Reproductive Health Impacts**

Wednesday, June 30, 2004

2:00-4:00 p.m. (Central Time)